

DISCRETIONARY BRIDGE PROGRAM

PROGRAM SUMMARY

BACKGROUND:

The Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1978 established the Highway Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation Program (HBRRP) to help the States improve the condition of the Nation's bridges. The HBRRP is administered through organizational channels by the FHWA's Office of Bridge Technology. The program is divided into two distinct categories:

(1) apportioned funds distributed according to relative State needs, and (2) discretionary funds set-aside for use by the Secretary of Transportation to replace or rehabilitate deficient, high-cost highway bridges on Federal-aid highways.

Appropriations for the Discretionary Bridge Program (DBP) fit into this second category and are described in Section 144(g) of 23 U.S.C. Some of these appropriations were reduced for a variety of reasons including budget reductions, obligation limitations, appropriations for a timber bridge program, etc. This section also describes eligible projects as costing more than \$10 million or twice the amount apportioned to a State for the fiscal year applicable. The program has been continued with each highway or transportation act since 1978, and the latest transportation act, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21, Public Law 105-178), has continued the program through 2003.

Legislation	Duration	Appropriation
STAA of 1978	FY 1979 - 1982	\$ 800,000,000
STAA of 1982	FY 1983 - 1986	800,000,000
STURAA of 1987	FY 1987 - 1991	1,125,000,000
ISTEA of 1991	FY 1992 - 1997	400,000,000
TEA-21 of 1998	FY 1998 - 2003	525,000,000
	TOTAL	3,650,000,000

STATUTORY REFERENCES:

23 U.S.C. 144; TEA-21 Section 1109

FUNDING

Fiscal Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Authorization	\$25M	\$100M*	\$100M*	\$100M*	\$100M*	\$100M*

* \$25,000,000 for seismic retrofit projects

For FY 1998 TEA-21 authorized \$25 million for projects for the seismic retrofit of a bridge described in Section 144(l) of Title 23. The STAA of 1978 and its associated Conference Report language made the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, California, eligible for assistance under this section.

For FY 1999 through FY 2003 TEA-21 authorizes \$100 million annually for bridge replacement and rehabilitation projects with a maximum of \$25 million of that amount being available only for projects for the seismic retrofit of bridges, including projects in the New Madrid fault region.

FEDERAL SHARE:

In accordance with 23 U.S.C. 144(f), the Federal share of the costs for any project eligible under this program is 80 percent.

OBLIGATION LIMITATION:

The DBP funds are subject to obligation limitation. For FY 2000 available funding was reduced to 87.1 percent of the authorized amount, however, 100 percent obligation authority was provided with the allocated funds. The available funding may also be decreased in FY 2001 - FY 2003.

ELIGIBILITY:

Deficient highway bridges on Federal-aid highway system roads may be eligible for DBP funds to the same extent as they are for bridge funds apportioned under 23 U.S.C. 144, provided that the total project cost for the candidate is more than \$10 million, or twice the amount of 23 U.S.C. 144 funds apportioned to the State during the fiscal year for which funding is requested.

The Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982, Section 161, directed the Secretary of Transportation to establish a rating factor for each DBP candidate based on seven items that must be considered as follows:

1. Sufficiency Rating
2. Average Daily Traffic
3. Average Daily Truck Traffic
4. Defense Highway Status
5. States= Unobligated HBRRP Balance
6. Total Project Cost (TPC)
7. Special Considerations

Only candidate bridges not previously selected with a computed rating factor of 100 or less are eligible for consideration. The rating factor is applicable to new start candidates only. The lower the rating factor, the higher the priority for selection.

In accordance with 23 U.S.C. 144(d), seismic retrofit projects for non-deficient highway bridges are also eligible. Therefore, bridges only in need of seismic retrofitting will be considered along with deficient bridges for allocating a portion of these funds. These projects must meet the \$10 million threshold.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

The DBP selection criteria have previously been published in the Federal Register (48 FR 52296, November 17, 1983) and are also codified as 23 CFR 650 Subpart G. To evaluate the submitted candidates consideration is given to the statutory and regulatory criteria found in 23 U.S.C. 144(d), 23 CFR 650 Subpart G, and Section 1223 of TEA-21.

Because many candidate projects are received each year, administrative considerations have been imposed to help prioritize and qualify the candidates. They were developed over time to match interpretations of the regulations and circumstances of importance at the time. They have generally proven effective in the selection process.

A summary of selection criteria is shown below:

1. The Rating Factor formula as described in 23 CFR 650 Subpart G.
2. Special considerations including unique situations (23 CFR 650 Subpart G). The FHWA has identified the need for seismic retrofitting as a unique situation. Special consideration will be given to bridges that are closed to all traffic or that have a load restriction of less than 10 tons. Priority consideration will be given to the continuation and completion of bridge projects previously begun with discretionary bridge funds. Consideration will also be given to bridges with other unique situations, and to bridge candidates in States which have not previously been allocated discretionary bridge funds.

3. The project selection process may also consider national geographic distribution among all of the discretionary programs, as well as congressional direction or guidance provided on specific projects or programs.
4. Seismic retrofit allocations for non-deficient bridges as described in 23 U.S.C. 144(d).
5. Priority may be given to funding a transportation project relating to an international quadrennial Olympic or Paralympic event, or a Special Olympics International event if the project meets the extraordinary needs associated with such events and is otherwise eligible for assistance with DBP funds (Section 1223).
6. The FHWA considers leveraging of Federal-aid funding with private and other public sector (city, county, and local) investment in ranking requests in the discretionary grant categories. Therefore, leveraged funds may be used to reduce the total project cost estimate (TPCE) for use in the rating factor formula set out in 23 CFR 650, subpart G. These leveraged funds can come from local, State, county, or private sources, but not from Federal sources.
7. Preference is given to those bridges previously funded that need additional funds in the first 3 quarters of the fiscal year and, also, to those unfunded bridge projects with the lowest rating factors that need funds in the first 3 quarters of the fiscal year.
8. Preference is also given to requests that will expedite the completion of a viable project over requests for initial funding of a project that will require a long-term commitment of future DBP funding. For large-scale projects, consideration is given to the State's total funding plan to expedite the completion of the project.
9. Bridge projects that are on the Interstate System and have been selected for DBP funds will receive funding at 50 percent of the requested amount, primarily because other Interstate discretionary funds are also available.
10. Bridges in the National Bridge Inventory with a date of construction or date of major reconstruction within the past 10 years are generally not considered deficient, and are not eligible for DBP funds. A bridge must have a sufficiency rating of 80 or less and must be structurally deficient or functionally obsolete to be eligible for funding. Bridges with ratings of less than 50 are eligible for replacement or rehabilitation funding, while those with ratings of 50 to 80 are eligible for rehabilitation (unless it is more cost effective to replace the structure).
11. The DBP funds will not be allocated to a State that has, in the previous fiscal year, transferred HBRRP funds to other categories of Federal funding.

12. Only candidates submitted with seismic retrofitting as the sole component that meet the \$10 million DBP requirement are considered eligible for the \$25 million set-aside. For projects which combine seismic retrofit and other eligible work, the combined cost must meet the \$10 million threshold, but the seismic portion may be less than \$10 million.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Preliminary engineering is not an eligible item for DBP funding, but the State could elect to use other eligible Federal-aid funding sources for this purpose. Submissions requesting right-of-way acquisition with DBP funds will be given low priority. States should be encouraged to seek other sources of funding for perennial ready-for-construction DBP candidates, which are unlikely to be selected because of high rating factors.

The Total Project Cost Estimate (TPCE) is to include preliminary engineering, right-of-way and construction costs associated with eligible bridge work (including seismic retrofitting costs if applicable) and bridge approach work. The TPCE of the bridge and bridge approaches is used to determine project eligibility and then to compute the rating factor. Therefore, particular care should be taken to ensure that estimates near the minimum \$10 million project cost limit are accurate.

Consideration is given to candidates submitted for replacement or rehabilitation with seismic retrofitting as a component along with candidates submitted with seismic retrofitting as the sole component.

Only State departments of transportation may submit applications for funding under this program. The information in the following application form must be included to properly evaluate the candidate projects. Those applications that do not include these items will be considered incomplete.

In addition, a one page briefing which includes a description of the proposed work, project schedules, and future funding needs is also required.

DISCRETIONARY BRIDGE APPLICATION FORM

1. Bridge Name: _____ State: _____ County: _____
2. NBI Structure Number (15 Digits): _____
3. U.S. Congressional District and Member=s Name: _____
4. Facility Carried: _____ Facility Intersected: _____
5. Type of Work:
Replacement_____ Rehabilitation_____
- Rehabilitation/Seismic Retrofit_____ Other (please specify)_____
- Seismic Retrofit Only_____
6. Date of last inspection: _____
7. Sufficiency Rating (from SI&A sheet submitted to FHWA=s Office of Bridge Technology): _____
8. Defense Highway Status: Yes(1.5)_____ No(1.0)_____
9. ADT(from SI&A Sheet): _____ ADTT: _____ ADT=: _____
10. Total Project Cost Estimate(TPCE) (include PE, ROW, CON, etc): _____
11. Cost Estimate for Construction only: _____
12. Federal DBP funds requested (Maximum of 80 % of 11 above): _____
13. Non Federal Matching amount and source: _____
14. Obligation Schedule by FY quarter for funds requested in 12 above: _____
15. Describe the construction request (substructure replacement, superstructure rehabilitation, seismic retrofit, etc): _____
16. Load Posted: Yes_____ No_____ List the Load Posting if yes _____.
17. Does this project qualify for priority under the provisions of Section 1223 of TEA-21 (Transportation Assistance for Olympic Cities)? Yes_____ No_____
18. Letting Date _____
19. Talking Points: Include a one page or less narrative, describing the project.

SOLICITATION PROCEDURE:

Each year in March, a memorandum is sent from FHWA's Office of Bridge Technology to the FHWA division offices, requesting the submission of candidate projects for the following fiscal year's funding. This solicitation is also published in the Federal register. The FHWA division offices provide this solicitation request to the State departments of transportation, who are the only agencies that can submit candidates. The State departments of transportation coordinate with local and Federal agencies within their respective States in order to develop viable candidate projects. The State departments of transportation submit the candidate applications to the FHWA division offices, who send them to the Office of Bridge Technology. Candidate projects are due in the Office of Bridge Technology on July 15.

The candidate project applications are reviewed and evaluated by the Office of Bridge Technology, and an allocation plan is prepared for the Federal Highway Administrator and Secretary of Transportation, who make the final selection. The announcement of the selections and allocations is usually done by the middle of November.

STATE TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Coordinate with State, local, and Federal agencies within the State to develop viable candidate projects.
2. Ensure that the applications for candidate projects meet the submission requirements outlined above.
3. Submit the applications to the local FHWA division office on time so that the submission deadline can be met.

FHWA DIVISION OFFICE RESPONSIBILITIES:

In order to ensure that the submitted candidates are complete and properly prepared, it is requested that the field offices:

1. Provide information regarding project eligibility, selection criteria and submission requirements to the State transportation department, and
2. Review all candidate applications submitted by the State prior to sending them to this office to ensure that they are complete and meet the above requirements. Candidates which do not meet the eligibility requirements should not be submitted to the Office of

Bridge Technology. If there are questions, please contact the Office of Bridge Technology at (202) 366-4622 or (202) 366-4619.

FHWA's OFFICE OF BRIDGE TECHNOLOGY RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Solicit candidates from the States through annual solicitation memorandum.
2. Review candidate project submissions and compile program and project information for preparation of allocation plan.
3. Submit allocation plan to the Office of the Federal Highway Administrator for use in making final project selections.
4. Allocate funds for the selected projects.

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